

JUN 25 1964

FOIAb3b

CPYRGHT



By TED LEWIS

Washington, June 24—President Johnson's choice of master spy emeritus Allen Dulles to evaluate the grim racial situation in Mississippi has, as might have been expected, been construed as a snub of Bobby Kennedy's prerogatives as head of the Justice Department.

The fact is that, in this instance, Johnson acted in accordance with the Attorney General's own recommendation. There was absolutely no devious design aimed at undercutting Kennedy's responsibilities as chief law enforcement officer.

It had been apparent for some time that an explosive situation was about to develop in Mississippi, due primarily to the plans of volunteer civil rights workers from out of the state for a summer "educational" and voter registration drive. The mysterious disappearance of three of these young workers earlier this week simply made a federal move imperative, and the President responded by dispatching Dulles to Jackson, Miss., today.

The possibility, if not probability, of ugly incidents had been appreciated by Mississippi Gov. Paul D. Johnson even before the case of the missing workers broke.

Gov. Johnson suggested to Washington that the Administration consider sending down a neutral, impartial representative to confer with him on law enforcement problems. It was recognized that improvements were urgent, for local and county officials often were a law unto themselves.

There was no quick pick-up of the Mississippi Governor's proposal. Kennedy then decided to move on his own. He suggested to the White House that Gov. Johnson's idea had merit. He personally recommended that Dulles, the 71-year-old former CIA chief with whom he had once clashed over responsibility for the Bay of Pigs fiasco, be picked for the job.

The Oxford Incident Still Isn't Closed

Kennedy considered Dulles particularly well suited as he had a national reputation and had never been connected in any way with the civil rights issue.

The President took the Attorney General's recommendation. He phoned the Mississippi Governor, found Dulles was most acceptable, and that was that.

It is the Administration's hope that Dulles will be able, at the least, to restore communications between federal law enforcement and state officials. These communications broke down after the Oxford, Miss., rioting of September, 1962. And it is worth recalling that Gov. Johnson, along with former Gov. Ross Barnett, is fighting a contempt conviction obtained by Kennedy's Justice Department in a case growing out of the Oxford troubles.

Dulles' job is basically limited to observing the state of law enforcement in Mississippi, conferring about the problem with Gov. Johnson and making recommendations to both the President and the Governor.

Obviously, Bobby Kennedy was not the man to tackle this delicate assignment. He would not go along with any Kennedy recommendations about what should be done. To do so would be to commit political suicide.



Gov. Paul D. Johnson
He saw trouble coming

The 'Let Us Reason Together' Touch

Kennedy's mere presence in Mississippi would stir segregationist passions not still them.

Incidentally, LBJ's decision to use Dulles is typical of the President's "let us reason together" approach to any crisis, domestic or foreign.

He hopes that the suave Dulles and Gov. Johnson can "reason together" and come up with a joint federal-state approach which will insure civil rights demonstrators their legal rights, not leave them at the mercy of local "redneck" political sheriffs and constables.

This is not going to be an easy job. Dulles will probably have to make a series of trips into Mississippi. But the Administration considers restoration of communications a "must."

Otherwise, the prospect is for a long, hot and violent summer. As the Administration sees it, there is no way to keep the hundreds of volunteer civil rights workers from descending on Mississippi in accordance with their long-hardened plan.

He Can't Discourage Rights Workers

For the President to propose that they call off their invasion would be tantamount to an admission that the federal government is powerless, or most reluctant, to protect American citizens in the State of Mississippi. Or pretty much of an admission that the Administration is playing politics with the civil rights issue and is anxious to keep the South in line for Lyndon in November.

Certainly, the dispatch of troops or a big contingent of federal marshals to keep law and order in Mississippi is not a solution that any President rushes into, especially in an election year when the civil rights issue appears likely to shift large blocs of votes every time serious violence develops.

The President undoubtedly realizes that his own stance, when and if the question of federal intervention arises in any Southern state, is a political hazard. If he is not as forceful as John F. Kennedy was in the Oxford and Birmingham crises, he will be accused of a weak posture for the sake of Southern votes in November. If he takes a tough stand, he could be in political trouble also, both in the South and in Northern states where there is that big "backlash" vote.

If the lid can be kept on serious violence in Mississippi through November, the combined efforts of Dulles and Gov. Johnson, it would certainly be to the President's political advantage. And probably as important as the present effort to contain the Viet Nam mess until the election.